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# The Promethean

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The literary journal of Concordia University-Portland, Oregon

Spring/Summer 2003

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Parad(igm)ox	3	TroySlonecker
Moment of Parting	4	
The Verge of Enlightenment	5	
I Am, King's Dream	6	Theresa Todd
Besieged	7	Phillip Huff
Awaiting Summer	8	Bethany L. Heim
To Spin I Used To	10	Tenille Wright
Mistress Language	11	
You Must Be Dreaming!	12	Andrew Uhacz
Silent Sounds	13	Stephen Bailey
Save Me	14	Whitney Sharpe
Eve	15	Jennifer Smith
John Wayne's	22	Jennifer Hallenius
Advice	23	Debbie Holts
Childhood Facades	24	Dana Morse
Where the Water Is	25	Randy Bush
The Poem Was Its Clothes	26	Anne Woodward
A Sense Of Close Uncertainty	27	Becky L. Delaware
My God	28	Grace Ringsrud

COVER ART BY GRACE RINGSRUD

PARAD(IGM)OX

*Troy Slonecker*

In his final breath,  
naked and worn

and

*forsaken,*

he forgave the man  
who bore nails  
in his hands.

## MOMENT OF PARTING

*Troy Slonecker*

### II. Moment of Parting

When the burning season comes  
and fields blaze in contained borders,  
smoke hovers in the atmosphere  
and glides amongst the warm and cold fronts.

In the unripened infancy of fall  
when summer has breathed her last  
warm breath, but the leaves have not  
browned nor the flowers entirely withered,

I recall sitting on that back porch  
and breathing the thick musty air,  
but this air was sweeter than that,  
my grandfather's hand on my knee

while he smoked the pleasant aroma  
of his wooden pipe, and we watched  
the bright blaze rising over the fields  
devouring the old and making way for the new.

## THE VERGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

*Troy Slonecker*

### IV. The Verge of Enlightenment

From the abandonment of an old fire tower  
the blackened soil simmered in the aftermath  
of an uncontrollable blaze, the rolling sea  
of infinite green and Douglas Fir

had smoldered to insignificant ash  
and the countryside was barren.  
The ragged edge of this blackness  
was a brown fringe along a timberline,

and through the timber meandered  
a small stream that flowed, unknowingly,  
as though nothing were lost. Then,  
looking over the edge of the tower,

I saw that the soil here was rich  
but the height was unnerving,  
not so high to disfigure the rocks below  
and not so low to offer security.

## I AM, KING'S DREAM

*Theresa Todd*

I am,  
The personification of his message.  
Judged on the content of my character  
And not my color.

I am  
The daughter of my White mother  
And Black father.  
Seen by some as either too Black  
Or too White,  
But,

I am  
Neither.  
I am defined only by what I do,  
On how I behave.

I am  
Because he was.  
I stand in this predominately White school,  
But I stand here,  
I learn here.  
I don't revel in difference,  
But in what I can do today.  
I stand for the equality he died for.

I am his dream.

## BESIEGED

*Phillip Huff*

Love it or Leave it  
Give Peace a Chance  
Shock and Awe  
Peacenik Jarhead  
Support our Troops  
No Blood for Oil  
Embedded  
In bed with  
Ratings Share  
Freedom Democracy Sexy  
United we Stand  
First Amendment  
On Terror  
On Iraq  
On Ourselves  
Republicans Democrats

American

# AWAITING SUMMER

Bethany L. Heim

A single candle burned low upon the desk. Stacks of schoolbooks lay discarded, spilling from the scarred surface to litter the cold stone floor. By the feeble candlelight, one pen was moving still, scratching pensively across a rumpled page.

*Starlit summer sky caress me,  
Hold me to your inky breast  
My summer star—*

The pen paused, and melancholy blue eyes turned to gaze out the nearest window. Beyond the great City of the Sacred Dragon Isle, the endless heavens wheeled in their eternal dance. But it had been autumn. Why did he remember that time with all the warmth and light of summer?

*My summer star, please keep me, teach me  
Show me who you love the best*

Aghast at his own selfishness, the fair-haired student stared at the words left behind his disobedient pen. Should it matter if his beautiful Tchoriye loved him best? Being loved a little surely was better than not at all. Angrily, he bent over the page, and the pen gouged the next words deeply into the parchment, the ink seeping in like blood upon the thirsty earth.

*I flew too near the sun one summer  
Dwelt within the vaulted sky  
The white-gold fire seared me, broke me  
Cast me toward the earth to die*

The image of two smiling green eyes pierced the shadows of his musings, and he felt deeply ashamed. What would his lover say of his moodiness? Possibly that he studied too much and had too little fun. Sometimes he felt that he would shatter under the pressure of his classes, and at other times he wished he would. Yet, always the thought of that beautiful smile sustained him.

*My wings had never borne such weight  
As when you caught me as I fell  
All breathless summer in your eyes  
I learned of heaven—*

Yes, heaven—love, tenderness, and joy so deep it was nearly agony—but also the constant pain of inevitable loss, of self-imposed exile.

*I learned of heaven and of hell  
The fruits of heaven were your lips  
Ambrosia on your tongue  
Your touch, your breath, your beating heart  
Two spirits became one  
And then came hell, one soul, two halves  
Rent asunder by my will  
My selfishness, my helplessness  
Brought early winter's chill*

But even winter would not have been so bad. Fondly, he remembered how two warm bodies intertwined to stave off the cold of an autumn morning. His desert-bred bones had shuddered in the arms of that smiling child of the wilderness, and yet he found himself longing with all of his heart to shiver again, just to feel those arms around him once more.

*Summer star, return to hold me  
Tell me that you love me still  
Teach me, reach me, make me yours alone*

That seemed a selfish request to make of a born wanderer. Fortunately, his beloved would never read these words. Even so...

*Forgive me, dearest, if you will  
The fool I am  
I understand  
In time summer will return*

In time. With the turning of the seasons. So why was that not soon enough? Well, he would make a poor king if he could not even curb his selfish impulses in so small a matter. Scrubbing his eyes dry, he convinced himself that it was only the candlelight that brought the unbidden tears.

## TO SPIN I USED TO

*Tenille Wright*

lift  
my head from  
gym floors decorated with bright take off  
lines waxed so well rows of lights  
reflected then

raised  
one leg as land-  
ing gear for pushing then balanc-  
ing with the other as if riding a  
bicycle till I let

go  
full force on my sturdy tiptoes as long as I can I'm

flying  
without resting my face on any one  
moment my feet flimsy as  
hands on a clock

dizz-  
ily an ungraceful world chas-  
es walls shaking and bend-  
ing till the room catches up to  
me and now

ground-  
ed my larger body  
heavy in years forgets danc-  
ing when I led wav-  
ing myself as a  
wand it  
folds picking a  
seat on wood-  
en rig-  
id  
bleachers.

## MISTRESS LANGUAGE

*Tenille Wright*

Thinly she is pinned down.  
To the letter she is shackled  
by points, marked by bound-  
aries. A few of her captives  
shave off her everyday eyes  
or feelers, they call it refine-  
ment. Everyone kisses her  
with different accents but  
many use manuals. They  
paint her in chopped,  
defined, lines. But,  
sometimes she  
sings her bars,  
creating new notes she whispers freedom through  
the visiting poet.

## YOU MUST BE DREAMING

*Andrew Ubacz*

Eyes closed fast and asleep  
Thinking and blinking and counting the sheep  
Rolling and kicking and tossing the turn  
The feelings are deep like pain they burn

Hear my mind so crazy it seems  
Fantasy I imagine the whole world in between  
Painting a picture as solid as rock  
11, 12, 1 o'clock  
Why can't it be true just me and you  
All alone yet close by in our thoughts  
Time goes on and the game is hard fought  
Can't break the streak don't have a clue  
Waiting and listening my days through

Night is gone, day is clear  
Wide awake but full of fear  
The rooster sings its day again  
My chest beats free as I breathe in  
Will my dreams come true or stay far from near?  
Today's a new day may the Lord be here

## SILENT SOUNDS

*Stephen Bailey*

The silent sounds of snowflakes are deafening to the ear,  
When one is all alone on earth and all that's left is fear.  
A heavenly hush does follow, each lonely frozen prism,  
As it slowly slides in solitude to build the walls of prison.

Over windswept rolls and frozen flows,  
My eyes search out and seek.  
While silent sounds the wall surrounds  
Hearing only my single beat.

I strain to gain some peace of mind,  
Midst the mounting muffled mesh.  
That powerless pain once again I find,  
With my singular struggling stress.

The footprints that I thought were there  
Have long been lost and covered.  
A short lived prayer that from despair  
A glimpse of hope once hovered.

The silence shouts and taunts at me,  
No hope to find the way.  
No longer love or life to see,  
My plan has ceased to play.

The darkness closes all around,  
No hope to find a friend.  
The warmth of coldness arms surrounds,  
Not far away the end.

As feelings fade for one last time  
The darkness seems so bright.  
From deepest dark to white sublime  
Cold eyes reflect a light.

Although I thought that all was lost  
And not a soul had cared,  
The searchers searched and braved the frost,  
And my lost life was spared.



# SAVE ME

Whitney Sharpe

Lay on the floor  
 Take jagged breaths  
 Hours go by  
 What I wouldn't give  
 To just be saved  
 Nothing I wouldn't do  
 For a touch  
 A hug with concern  
 A kiss with passion  
 Something to fill me  
 The people I love  
 Too far to call out to  
 The man I want  
 Too far to reach for  
 Hands clasp together  
 And I cry  
 Long for something else  
 Only wish I knew what  
 Close my eyes  
 Sigh with frustration  
 I want more  
 Than what I have  
 I need more  
 Than what I've got  
 Please  
 Someone find me  
 Save me from myself  
 Take me home

# EVE

FROM PART TWO OF "A VIEW FROM THE CEILING"

Jennifer Smith

Eve was sure she would have told him, if only he hadn't died. That thought, because she kept trying to convince herself, echoed in her head, mixed in with thoughts of the oppressiveness of the hospital lobby. And as she sat there on the scratchy wool couch, she was sure that everyone could hear those negative vibrations rattling around just behind her forehead. The silence in the lobby was overwhelming. The pale green walls offered no solace, even though she knew they were designed to. *You're beneath them*, her traitorous mind taunted her. She sighed, and rubbed her face. It was eleven at night, and her eyes were so dry they were beginning to burn.

*I wish I hadn't been the first one to get there*, she thought churlishly. *I wish I had burst into hysterics when they told me Jeremy was dead. But no. Instead I ask questions like, "Are his organs salvageable?" and "How long did it take him to die?"* She'd said no to coffee or tea, like an idiot, thinking she'd be better off without them.

Eve couldn't help it. She started to imagine what the funeral would be like. *I should wear a dress, she thought. But I don't look good in dresses. I won't look sad in a dress.* Mentally she catalogued her wardrobe. *Why do I have so many black clothes? Am I just waiting around for funerals?* Finally she picked one in her head. *The one that ties in the back. That should be adequately funereal. Besides, I've nothing else nice enough. It's really too bad you have to wear black to a funeral. I look better in blue. More dignified. Could I wear a dark blue? No.* She smoothed out the wrinkles in her forehead, while, for a moment her eyes closed.

The funeral would be nice, Eve supposed, as funerals went. Not like her uncle's. Her uncle's had been bad. People had been falling over drunk, even the priest, especially the priest, and her second cousin had hit on her. *No one will be drunk this time*, she told herself, trying to be positive, or late. *The reception will be at his parents' house afterwards, and it won't be bad either. No one will say anything too stupid. That'll be good, for Ed and Amanda. Everyone will just sort of hum their apologies to me on their way by, never looking me in the eye. I suppose I won't look too devastated, but I don't really think I should look devastated anyway. Besides, no one wants me to have a breakdown, or throw myself on the coffin. Everyone just wants to know that I loved him, that I wanted to marry him. No one wants to feel guilty when they leave because no one's died in their family. I don't mind.* She really didn't.

Since the reception would be at Jeremy's parent's house, she knew she would have to stay until everyone else left, cleaning things up. That, she supposed, was her role as fiancée of the recently deceased. His parents would disappear long before then anyway, where to she wasn't sure, so she would wander aimlessly, collecting all the cards and "I'm sorry" things into one general stack on the kitchen table. Then she would go find them. They would be in his old room, now a den. *I wonder if they feel guilty for converting it*, she thought nastily, as she imagined listening to them composing themselves.

She would manage to smile when they opened the door. "Listen Eve, if you need anything," they would say, and squeeze her hand when she demurred. *I should be saying that to them*, she yelled to herself, upset at her daydream. *They've lost a son. They're the ones who won't sleep tonight for thinking about him.* But still she knew she wouldn't say anything. They would take her silence for despair.

"In time," they would offer, and she knew she would have to resist her frustration.

Eve's mind snapped back to the present. The TV overhead, which was silently playing some late night talk show, switched to commercial, and in a half second of black transition she saw their reflections. *Great*, she thought, resigned, *just great.*

"Eve," Amanda whispered, her eyes wet with fat, glossy tears. Reluctantly Eve rose to be folded into her bulky mothering arms. Amanda squeezed her painfully, swaddling Eve in flesh, and then released her to her husband Edward, who did the same. Eve had hoped, absurdly, that they wouldn't come. And even as she had hoped it, she knew she hadn't a chance of it being true, Jeremy was their child after all. Together they walked into his room, arm in arm, making, Eve was sure, quite a picture of grief.

The sight of him still on the table reduced Amanda to sobs, and she collapsed in her husband's arms. Eve went to the table instead, and stared at his chest, where blood had stained the sheet covering him. She tried to think of what to do next, and as Amanda peered at her from the safety of Edward's arms, all Eve could think to do was kiss him. *They do it in movies*, she told herself. *His body is cold, his lips are cold. But not as cold as I thought it would be. Aren't dead bodies supposed to be freezing? Why doesn't his face show signs of the accident? Look at the blood on the sheet. His chest must be pretty mangled and red. Like meat. Did I take anything out for dinner? Why am I still kissing him?*

Abruptly she pulled back up, and looked over again at Amanda and Edward, to see if they'd noticed. They hadn't. Eve eyed Jeremy's chest again. The doctor had told her that he had punctured his lungs flying through the windshield. His lungs had filled with blood, and, basically, he drowned. He'd barely made it to the hospital before he died and now she stood next to his lukewarm body. *What am I going to do?* she wondered, covering her eyes with her hands. *I would have told him. I would have. I would have.*

Several hours later, back in their apartment, now her apartment, Eve told Jeremy's fish Melvin instead. She sat with a glass of wine, her sixth, staring at the colorlessly decorated apartment, the apartment that Jeremy had decorated. Then she remembered something else, and told Melvin that too. "Someone told me today, a doctor I think, because he knew how Jeremy had died, that when you drown, after the water has filled your lungs—I guess in his case blood—but before you actually die, that there is peace, that life is...serene...that drowners actually smile." Eve took a sip of wine and stared at Melvin. She hiccuped.

"Fish can drown you know. I don't mean when you take them out of water...that's not really drowning...but if they are in something else, that's not water. They can't get enough oxygen, asphyxiation, cells bursting...all that jazz." She waved her hand in the air to elaborate her point, and then walked away from Melvin into the kitchen to refill her glass. "That must be the nicest feeling in the world." She walked

over to the fish tank and rubbed the glass affectionately, knowing better than to tap it. "Too bad you have to die to find it."

She paused for a minute, and then looked at Melvin again, one fish alone in a big glass tank. "I didn't cry." Eve sat in the middle of a large white couch, Jeremy's, glad for once that it swallowed her. "It's not that I'm not sad, or that I wanted it to happen. It's not even like I didn't feel anything for him, it's just that..." Eve broke off her sentence, afraid of what Melvin would think, until she remembered he was just a fish. "It didn't break my heart, and it didn't shatter my world. It mattered...but not a lot. I'm okay. But I think that means I'm horrible."

Melvin swam toward the bottom of the tank. He looked disinterested, bored with her whining. *Jeremy was always bored with you too.*

"No. You don't get it," Eve insisted, suddenly vehement, wine splashing over the rim of the glass as she leaned forward, eyeing his showy yellow skin. "I'm not repressing—I'm okay. I feel fine, except for the fact that I feel fine and I know I shouldn't. Don't you understand how horrible that makes me? He was my fiancé, and he's dead, and I am an unfeeling monster." Melvin seemed to perk up at that, and swam closer, his eyes looking gross and huge and bulbous. She could make out her reflection as well, and figured she didn't look much better, though she was sure it was due to the bend of the glass.

She leaned forward to stare at him. "I didn't tell anybody. That would have been crazy." Her voice sounded slurry, so she worked to enunciate more clearly, pushing her loose hair out of her face. "You see," she asked, imagining Melvin did not see, frowning as she continued. "Do you know what I thought about?" she asked repulsed by her ugliness. "I wondered what I would look like at his funeral. I wondered what I was going to do with all his stuff, including you. I wanted to leave because I was...over it. And then, his parents came, and everybody kept squeezing my arms and consoling me, and I wanted to shoot myself." She flopped back down onto the couch and covered her eyes. "His parents tried to console me," she said dully. "They couldn't even see me. And I...I couldn't face them. I couldn't say anything to them, because I was afraid that they'd know how much less it meant to me. And when the funeral comes, they'll sit in his room and cry, dying on the inside, fading away in front of my very eyes, and I'll do the dishes."

"I know I didn't love him. But still, what does that say about me?" She interrupted herself, avoiding the question. "I was going to marry him after all. I keep telling myself I would have told him, but I mean...Jesus." She sagged further into the couch, hoping again that it would eat her alive.

"I don't know. I don't even know what I want the answer to that question to be. I can't even bear to think about it, because I'm afraid of the answer. All I know is that some part of me feels..." She trailed off unable to say the words, but both she and Melvin knew she was going to say "relieved."

Eve looked at her wineglass spitefully. She hated red wine, but it was all they, she, had in the house. *Jeremy just adored red wine. Always had to have red wine didn't you Jeremy?* She tried not to feel resentful, but she did anyway. *You'd think*, she muttered to her brain, *that when your fiancé dies, even if you are having a breakdown, that you could be a little more forgiving.*

Eve rubbed her arms and smiled suddenly, almost good-naturedly at Melvin. She felt a little dulled. Wine was very nice for some things. "I should go to bed. I'm tired. I'm too drunk to go anywhere, but I live here, so it doesn't matter." She stood up slowly, trying to maintain her balance.

And then, unexpectedly changing her mind, she decided she would move Melvin's tank out of the bland living room into the kitchen. She figured he deserved a change of scenery. *Hell*, she thought, *he loved Jeremy too, maybe more than I did, this has got to be hard for him*. She ambled toward him, and grabbed his tank in her arms, staggering a little since it was a fairly large and awkward contraption. She wondered, briefly, if this was a good idea, but dismissed the concern with a shrug. Slowly, she moved him to the kitchen, placing Melvin's tank on the counter next to the sink.

She pulled a water bottle from the refrigerator, and a wave of dizziness overwhelmed her. She reached past Melvin for the Tylenol—*no, not Tylenol with alcohol, bad for the liver, Aspirin instead*—she really had drunk too much, when somewhere in the process of reaching for it, his tank fell, shattering against the floor. Water, blue sand, and tiny pieces of plant and castle spewed out over the neat black and white linoleum, along with the shards of glass, and floundering Melvin.

Eve dropped to her knees, wincing as glass cut into her skin. *Damn, damn, damn. Come on Melvin, stay still*. She tried desperately to catch him, as his slimy body flopped around the floor spastically. *Stupid fish*. Finally she managed to scoop him into a coffee mug. After pulling pieces of glass off of him, she dumped the entire contents of her water bottle over him. She pleaded with him to stay alive. Little red rivulets of blood streamed down her knees, pooling on the floor. The saltwater of his tank hurt her, but she didn't care. She watched him for signs of life, finally breathing when he swam twice around the mug.

"I'm sorry Melvin. Tomorrow I promise I'll buy you a huge tank with a busty mermaid and a treasure chest." He looked unresponsive, so she apologized again. Finally she noticed the mess her legs were. Her knees wobbling, Eve limped back to the sink, and wiped the blood off with a paper towel. One of the cuts seemed really deep. *Great, I probably need stitches*, she thought. *Not like I can do anything about it now*. She receded into the corner of the floor with the least broken glass and fell to the ground shaking. *This isn't fair*, her mind screamed, as she dropped her head back against a cabinet, trying to ignore everything.

Eve fell asleep in the kitchen, her body twisted uncomfortably next to the cabinet to avoid the glass. When she woke up, a few hours later, she had a pounding headache and the phone was ringing. She tried to haul herself up on the lip of the counter, but her bare feet slipped on the glass, and she fell back down again. *Let the answering machine get it*, she ordered herself, and dropped her head back on the cabinet.

"Eve?" *Oh great—it was her mother—just what I need*.

"Eve I just heard. I'm coming. Are you there? Amanda called me. She's been up all night. She said the funeral is not until Tuesday, so if I can't get a flight out there right away...are you there? Amanda said you seemed stunned." *Stunned? That's better than miserably apathetic. What's the word? Lackadaisical?*

"Call me when you get this." Eve rolled her eyes. Only her mother would be up this early, even considering the time difference. She looked at the clock; it was barely five.

She tried again to hoist herself up, and was successful. *Well, there you go*, she thought. *One step at a time*. She swayed a little. She tiptoed over to Melvin's cup and saw Melvin overturned, lying on his back like he was sunbathing. She realized, that instant, what she'd done.

"I've killed you," she whispered. "God, I've killed you." She picked up the Evian bottle and glared at it angrily. "Salt water you jerk," she screamed at herself, "he's a salt water fish. Not Appalachian spring water. Salt! Don't you know anything?"

She let go of the bottle. Her eyes, horribly wet, mocked her. *Why'd Jeremy have to have a salt-water fish anyway*, she wondered, *why couldn't he just be normal? Why couldn't he have been more loveable, or realized I didn't love him, or dumped me and taken his stupid fish, and his bland white apartment and his red wine with him, so that I wouldn't have had to deal with this. So that I wouldn't have to wonder if I'd ever have had the guts to leave him. So I wouldn't have to go to a stupid funeral, or get stupid stitches or anything. Now I'm a killer, I've killed a fish. I don't even like fish*. She kicked the cabinet. She hated her life. She hated Jeremy. She hated herself more.

*I am going to be late for work tomorrow—today*, she thought. *Maybe I just won't go. I've got reason enough. "I won't be in to work today," that's what I'll tell them, and if they ask why, I'll say "because my fiancé died about 8 hours ago, I need stitches for my knee, and I've just murdered a stupid saltwater fish." And any semblance of the person you once were drowned in Jeremy and now he's dead and you can't get it back*.

Eve decided she needed a vacation. If she could ever get out of the kitchen, and through the funeral, she was going to take one. And then she was going to redecorate, buy a real pet, one that didn't live in water, and live happily ever after with it, and no one was ever going to get to die on her again, whether she really loved them or not, because she was sick of this.

Eve peered at Melvin, his bloated little corpse in a coffee cup coffin. *Poor thing. You're not smiling. I think they lied*.

And then, suddenly, an idea occurred to her. She ran to her room, slid on a bathing suit and grabbed a pair of Jeremy's old goggles. She slipped downstairs to the apartment complex's pool. She was going to try and almost drown herself—just almost, enough to get that peace.

The pool water was warm, but still cooler than she was, and Eve repressed a shiver. *A saltwater pool*, she noted, *how perfectly convenient*. She slowly descended the stairs, and could practically see the salt and chlorine swimming towards her, eager to drag her under. She hunkered down to let her body get comfortable with the water, but keeping her head above, so she wouldn't fog the goggles. She paddled over to the bench, put her goggles on, and pushed herself under. Fighting against her body's natural tendency to float, she wrapped her legs around the legs of the bench, and pressed her hands to the underside of it. Her skin turned pale green, colored by the dark early morning and the water around her. Everything looked too still.

Ten seconds later, not smiling at all, and not feeling an ounce of peace, Eve realized that she couldn't just hold her breath, but that she had to swallow water. She



shut her eyes, pursing her lips sourly. *This is dumb*, she thought, *really dumb*. She started laughing at her own stupidity, but rose quickly as she swallowed water. She banged her shoulder on the bench on the way up and shouted underwater in pain, sucking in liquid inadvertently. Coughing, sputtering, and gritting her teeth against the pain in her shoulder, she still managed to laugh in the air, water trickling from her nose. When she finally cleared her lungs, the absurdity of what she planned still hung around her, pressing a smile to her lips. Eve ducked back under the water, the wind too freezing for her skin to bear. She moved back over to the steps and dipped her hair under to smooth it, her face resting softly above the surface.

"Ma'am?" A security guard loomed overhead suddenly, filling her eyes with his wrinkled face. Eve started, and, feeling indecent, backed away to the opposite wall. "Ma'am, you can't be in here. The pool doesn't open till seven." He frowned repressively at her, showing her his watch which clearly said ten to six. Eve slunk back to the steps again and crept out. He shoved her towel at her and tried his best to look stern and forbidding. "What apartment do you live in?"

"Sorry. 7B. I'm in 7B."

He looked confused for a second, then nodded. "Oh, Mr. Bentham's girlfriend."

Eve rolled her eyes. "Sorry," she murmured again, wrapping the towel under her arms. "I was just about to get out." He looked skeptical. "Honestly." She felt oddly giddy. She wanted to run to the door, but she was sure the guard would deem that horseplay, which the large blue sign at the gate forbade. He softened a little at her smile, but still he hustled her to the door.

"Just don't do it again."

She nodded, and was about to leave, but then stopped abruptly, stretching a hand out to the security guard. "Can I ask you a question?"

He looked at her puzzled. "Sure," he said, and shrugged.

She pulled the towel up closer around her shoulders. She couldn't believe she was about to say this. "If you," she paused, searching for the right words. "If you had to tell someone something, something big, but never got a chance to because...because they went away. But it would have hurt them. Would you regret it? Would you feel like you hadn't earned..." She knew she hadn't asked her question clearly, but the guard seemed to understand.

He looked at her as if he suddenly saw her, his eyes suddenly sad. "Worst thing I ever did in my life was cheat on my wife. She had cancer, and was dying, and I just couldn't take it. So I cheated on her."

Eve made a face. She had asked, but she wasn't really prepared for this confidence. He misread her confusion for disgust. "I only did it once. And then the next day I was back at her side, holding her hand." He rubbed the back of his hand over his forehead, lifting his cap with the movement. Eve stared at him, and silence fell as Eve tried to figure out what the hell his point was. She shifted awkwardly. He smiled, almost shyly at Eve, but then sobered and shooed her away. "I only want to see you here during regulation hours."

Eve started, and then chided herself for being so trite. *Well, what did you think he was going to say? That he never told her, and she died only a few months later. That it was the*

*worst thing he ever did, but the worst thing he could have done would have been to tell her. Did you really expect him to say something as backneyed as "I regret cheating on her. But I don't regret the hurt I never caused her."*

Eve leaned in impulsively and kissed his cheek. "You got it," she promised, "I swear it won't happen again." She grinned and slipped away, leaving gleaming footprints on the tile.

Back in her apartment, Eve was still smiling. She walked to the bookshelf where pictures of Jeremy beamed from the shelves. She picked up one; he was grinning broadly and waving, probably to her taking the picture, since she'd always been the one taking the pictures. *He looks really stupid. Did he always look that stupid? Where did he get that shirt?* She shook her head. "I wasn't going to marry you Jeremy. I don't know when I was going to tell you or how. But I would have told you. I'm glad I didn't get the chance to though. You still would have died, and it would have hurt you, God, I hope it would have hurt..." She moved her thumb in a circle around his face, "...it just doesn't matter." She put his picture down and touched the tip of her finger to his waving hand. *What an awful shirt.* Tears dropped from her eyes, threading in at the corners and weaving back out. She gave a quiet laugh, and let herself cry as long as she needed to.

When she stopped crying she turned away and wiped her footprints off the floor. She wove her way into the kitchen, and grabbed Melvin's cup, and headed toward the bathroom. She gave him a solemn flush down the toilet and a minute of silence. Finally, she looked at herself in the mirror. She looked pale and sticky, and she knew she should shower before the chlorine turned her hair green, but she figured it could wait. She was surprised to see she looked almost normal, pretty good in fact. Then she reminded herself it had only been one night, that her conscience hadn't even gotten a chance to paint circles under her eyes, and that it wouldn't. She twisted her hair to push the water out and grinned.

As an afterthought, she walked back to the waving picture of Jeremy. "I'm sorry I killed Melvin," she said. "Say hi to him for me will you?"

Eve looked at the clock. It was just barley after six. She knew Amanda would be up. She reached for the phone.

"Hello, Amanda? Yes, my mother called. Is there anything I can do? I could order the flowers... Yes, I could make a casserole." Eve smothered a small laugh. "Tuna all right?"

JOHN WAYNE'S

(after ee cummings' *Buffalo Bill*)

*Jennifer Hallenius*

John Wayne's  
defunct

who used to  
ride an ordinary brown  
horse

and ride a onetwothree; fourfive pony, just like that  
Wheeew doggie

he was a tough man

and what I want to know is

how do you like your cowboy  
Pilgrim

ADVICE

*Debbie Holts*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
The age-old adage goes;  
How do I decide what is good  
At every fork in the road?

"Take the road less traveled by,"  
encourage some iconoclasts.  
"Come with us; choose this life"  
sound out the passing mass.

Where should I go? What should I do?  
The voices in my head make no sense.  
So, I listen to my heart, to myself am true,  
And that has made all the difference.

## CHILDHOOD FACADES

Dana Morse

*Ring around the rosy*

Around and around, never ending, never ceasing.  
The deep, luscious colors of silent agony surround circling figures.

*Pocket full of posy*

Fragrant flowers cover the smells of death.  
A facade of simplicity over a scene of chaos.

*Ashes, Ashes*

From dust to dust, death protrudes from  
A light, corrosive film that covers the pain.

*We all fall down*

Life ends, children play, time continues  
Around and around, never ending, never ceasing.

## WHERE THE WATER IS

Randy Bush

Story 1: Remember those long, long Jerry Lewis MD telethons? Forty straight hours the man would have been on his feet when some grinning vice president (in a \$500 suit) would stretch out a five-foot long company check for \$100,000. Jerry would laugh (or cry—he'd be fairly shot by then) and say, "God bless you! Wow, folks! Isn't this beautiful? Lets give So-And-So, Inc. a huge round of applause."

I wonder if Jerry ever thought, 'You corporate fraud. You fake. This is low-budget advertisement not sacrifice.' If he did he never let on. His worry was "his kids" and money was money.

Story 2: A man walks into a library with an overdue book and a guilty smile. The person behind the desk is an old friend and, with a keystroke, cancels the \$5 fine. Instead of the expected "Hey, thanks!" the man says, "You've covered my debt and that's great. But there are people a lot less able to pay than me. Here's a twenty. Pay some fines with it and make someone's day. *But don't say where the money came from.*" And since most who read this know what Jesus thought about the Pharisee's public gift and the poor woman's private gift, we can move on.

I think we understand that shouting, "Look at me: I'm holy," is about as problematic as "You'll do what I say because I'm in charge!" My dad never said that and, oddly enough, I never wondered who was. But where true authority has no need to puff itself up, true holiness is incapable of doing so. Christlikeness must begin in belief and end in behavior. In imitation of God, the true believer commits holy action because the source of his or her being is holiness. All else is play-acting and anyone can do that (The devil can act like an angel of light but, from snout to toenails, he's still the devil.)

And, with what's happening around us as I write this, I can't help running America as a people through that same equation: the more we hold ourselves up as examples of truth and justice and godliness the less chance we have of actually being "little Christs" to a world who may know better than to confuse us with kindly neighbors. Angels of mercy we are not, but redeemed we can be.

I'm convinced that our belief in Whose we are (as Christians) is wonderful but dangerous. It leaves us particularly susceptible to vanity and self-deception. Maybe that's part of why our way is called the "narrow way." It's so easy for us to think we're hot stuff. (Recall the posturing of the Salem witch trial judges or, more recently, the perverse arrogance of the several varieties of so-called "Prosperity Gospels.")

The late Clifford R. Horn, missionary and Concordia University professor, once said, "I'm nobody. I'm just one beggar trying to lead another to water." Hear that? It's the sound of someone who actually knows where the water is.

## THE POEM WAS ITS CLOTHES

*Anne Woodward*

I saw it getting out of the water and putting its clothes back on  
I saw it ascending from the surface of the water  
I saw the sand clinging to its wet feet  
I saw it stooping, naked, to gather its rumpled clothes  
It shook the drips off

I saw it before it could look up and see the light of day from underneath the water  
It held its breath, big-cheeked and bug-eyed like in the movies  
Like I never thought it looked in real life  
I felt its lungs almost bursting as it struggled toward the surface  
It knew others had never reached the top

## A SENSE OF CLOSE UNCERTAINTY

*Becky L. Delaware*

Ambiguity is a feather floating in the wind.  
Do you know where its destination lies?

I don't.

Maybe it will fall in the pond close by  
And give away its nature.

We can only hope.

We can only hope that it won't travel to some distant land  
Creating a trail behind itself.

A trail behind itself that no one can follow.

No one.

Not even you.

Not even me.

## MY GOD

Grace Ringsrud

You're my God and You're my Lord,  
My Savior and my friend;  
Creator of the universe  
Beginning and the end.

Your power's like a mighty storm,  
Your strength is like the seas.  
Your ways are like the precious lamb,  
As gentle as a breeze.

You always listen, always hear.  
You never turn away.  
With loving words and gentle hands  
You lead me night and day.

You always comfort, always love,  
No matter how I stray.  
You're my shepherd; I'm your lamb,  
With You I'll always stay.

My Lord, my God, You are my King,  
My Father and my friend.  
And through all things you give me love,  
A love without an end.

You are mighty, you are crowned,  
You're Lord of Heaven and land.  
Seas will part and rain will fall  
At Your word, at Your command.

To You the mountains bow their heads;  
To You the oceans roar.  
You've given voice that we may praise  
And wings that birds may soar.

You're my God and You're my Lord,  
My Savior and my friend;  
Creator of the Universe,  
The Beginning and the End.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Stephen Bailey** writes, "After more than thirty years, I decided to return to school and finish my degree (B.S., Arts and Letters) and then continue my education at Concordia University, receiving my Masters of Arts, Teaching. I have enjoyed writing poetry and short stories over the years and have had some works published. My next goal is to publish a book of my poetry accompanied by artwork from my other passion — photography.

**Randy Bush** writes, "In my more than 3,600 days at CU-Portland—all good, by the way—I've fallen in love with my own 'search for a Clue' (to borrow from Dr. Hill). I want to Learn from you, Reader! I want to be a better servant of both God and people. The 'Water' piece is part of that conversation."

**Becky L. Delaware** is a junior studying Secondary Education with an emphasis on English. Not only does she aspire to be a great high school English teacher, but she also wants to publish a book of poetry someday.

**Bethany L. Heim** writes, "I have been creating stories ever since I can remember, but I only began writing seriously when I was in ninth grade. I like to write in several genres, including fantasy, adventure, and historical fiction. My frequent co-author and I have a novel that is nearly ready for publication. This particular piece, "Awaiting Summer," is a snapshot of one moment in the life of a character from a larger work that is still very much in progress.

**Jennifer Hallenius** is a secondary education major in Language Arts. She is married with two sons who are eight and three, and she is currently pregnant. This is her first time submitting her work. Jennifer writes, "My inspiration on some of my poems is my three year old son."

**Debbie Holts** is majoring in secondary education and would like to teach English and history. She is a Virgo who enjoys long walks on the beach and sporting events.

**Phillip Huff** is working towards his teaching certificate so he can teach high school English and theatre. He has spent the last six years as the Artistic Director for the Portland Actors Ensemble. This is his first foray into the literary world and he is grateful to *The Promethean* for the opportunity.

**Dana Morse** is a junior in the Interdisciplinary Studies program. Her dream is to be a children's librarian. Her passion for children, music, books (especially children's literature), and God shine in her everyday life.



**Whitney Sharpe** is a freshman at CU majoring in psychology. She has been a writer since early elementary school. She writes, "The poem 'Save Me' was written not too long ago and reflects a difficult period in my life, one that I've undergone for several years, thinking that no one is out there."

**Grace Ringsrud** writes, "I wrote this poem as a sort of reflection and prayer to God. He is everything to me. I enjoy writing every once and a while but I do not consider myself a writer. This is something that came from one of my quiet times with God."

**Troy Slonecker** is a 2003, spring English major who is looking forward to traveling next year before pursuing graduate studies.

**Jennifer Smith** is graduating in spring 2003. Her joy is endless. She also hopes in the midst of her euphoria that you enjoy her story.

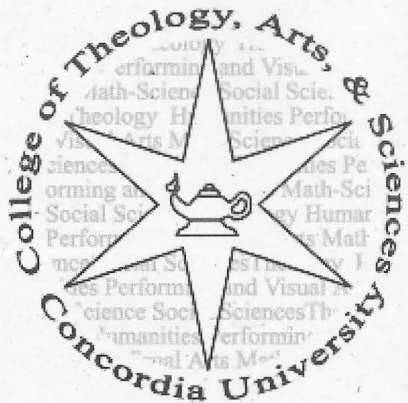
**Theresa Todd** is a secondary education major hoping to teach high school English. This is the first time she has appeared in *The Promethean*.

**Andrew Uhacz** plans to major in Business and minor in Marketing. A sophomore transfer from George Fox University, he plays soccer for Concordia and is involved in Chi Beta Chi. He writes, "Leaving behind friendships and memories to make room for the new ones is not always an easy task. As of now I think God is telling me to pursue my education at CU, and I'm looking forward to next fall."

**Anne Woodward** is a sophomore studying elementary education and missions. She was recently elected vice president to the ASCU student body where she plans to capitalize on the "vice" in her position title. In addition, she recommends drinking eight glasses of water per day because it guarantees study breaks.

**Tennille Wright** is currently finishing her student teaching and looking to either teaching or pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing for next year. Both of the poems published here are a result of a free poetry workshop she attended at the NW Multnomah County Library. She writes, "'To spin I used to' is inspired by spinning on one foot on gym floors when I was little. That spinning sort of felt like magic. 'Mistress Language' is inspired by frustrations and freedoms I've felt with language. Many college papers I've written have been given feedback like "awkward" because I sometimes have difficulty writing clearly. It is also inspired by my hobby of making up words. Once I used the word "psycho-ness" with my writing/lit. advisor, and so I had to explain to him my habit of making up words."





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